

Does Someone You Know Drink Too Much?

Most of us know at least one person who drinks too much, perhaps a spouse or significant other, friend, family member or co-worker. Alcohol problems can happen to anyone; it doesn't matter where you work, how old you are, or if you're male or female. The increased use of alcohol can sometimes "sneak-up" on you especially in times of high stress. However, the negative effects of alcohol abuse can be numerous for the individual and for those who care about him or her. Signs and symptoms of alcohol abuse can include:

- Guilt and remorse associated with alcohol use
- Failing to meet obligations due to alcohol use
- Giving up or cutting back on other activities and increasing alcohol use
- Alcohol use that increases other risky behaviors

While it is true that you can not control someone else's use of alcohol, you may be able to help him/her recognize that there could be a problem, and also reduce the possible negative impact that it has on you. Consider the following suggestions:

- Don't try to protect the drinker from the consequences. Trying to cover up for problems created by someone else's drinking can seem like the kind thing to do, but can actually prolong the problem and enable the drinking to get worse.
- Don't try to "diagnose." General statements like "you drink too much" or "you have an alcohol problem" will usually be met with defensiveness and denial.
- Do try to focus on what is in your control and take good care of yourself.
- Do consider contacting the Employee Service Program to confidentially discuss your concerns.

Employee Service Program Counselors can provide assistance by **confidentially** discussing any questions you may have regarding the drinking patterns of someone you care about, or even your own. An ESP counselor will talk with you about your concerns, explore options and resources, and if needed help connect you with a professional who specializes in this area. Your ESP counselor will also keep in contact with you to make sure the referral resources are being helpful.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss your concerns with an Employee Service Program Counselor, please contact the program in Lansing 517-373-7630, in Detroit at 313-456-4020, or toll free at 800-521-1377. You may also wish to complete the ESP free anonymous Interactive Screening for Alcohol. The screening can also be taken for someone you are concerned about by answering the questions as you believe they apply to that person. The screening can be accessed online at <http://www.mentalhealthscreening.org/screening> (keyword: espmi), or by telephone at 1-800-887-5676.